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International School of Kabul Students Model Community Service: In a country with limited understanding and resources for children with special needs, the students of the USAID funded International School of Kabul (ISK) recently made a difference for children with cerebral palsy. ISK students launched a campus-wide clothing drive with the aim to help others and better their community. All of the international school's classes participated by collecting donated clothing for the Streams Project, a program that works with families of children with cerebral palsy in Taloqan, Takhar province. ISK students collected 100 bags of clothing and then held a movie fundraiser to purchase basic toiletries and food.

A mother of a child with cerebral palsy receives clothing collected by International School of Kabul students.

PHOTO: USAID/ISK

Each school year, ISK student council members and students undertake community service projects, demonstrating a commitment to Afghanistan's future. In past years, they have planted trees, volunteered at a local hospital, and organized canned food drives. Through community service, students are improving the lives of their fellow Afghans and discovering how they can have a positive impact on the world around them.

Teachers learn to use a model clock to teach students how to tell time during a PACE-A teacher training session.

PHOTO: USAID/PACE-A

Improving Reading and Math Instruction in Community-based Schools: In Afghanistan, many remote areas lack formal primary schools, so the Ministry of Education and the U.S. Government are working together to extend coverage to these underserved villages. To ensure that all Afghan children have access to a quality education, USAID's Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) project establishes community-based primary school classes and trains Afghans to teach them.

Through PACE-A, USAID recently provided training for 108 teacher trainers from 18 provinces of Afghanistan. The training will improve teachers' capacity to teach reading to rural students in community classes throughout the country. The teachers also learned to use math manipulatives, which are toys or tools that physically demonstrate mathematical concepts, to enrich regular math instruction. USAID will provide

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follow-up training to more than 2,000 rural teachers in time for the start of the 2010 school year in late March.

"I appreciate the efforts of teacher support working group members in initiating this training to improve the quality of interaction between the students and teachers," said Nahid, one of the teacher trainers.

New Training Materials for Science and Math Teachers: To ensure that Afghanistan's teachers are equipped to provide a quality education to their students, the U.S. Government and the Ministry of Education worked together to ensure proper teacher training. Recently, the Ministry of Education's Teacher Education Department (TED) and USAID produced a training manual for grade 7-12 science and math teachers. The workshop participants also designed 36 training sessions that will reach 14,000 teachers across 11 provinces in Afghanistan between March and June 2010. Senior trainers successfully piloted the training sessions, including *General Math Methods*, *Problems and Challenges of Teaching Trigonometry,* and *Developing Lesson Plans for Geology*.

USAID and Ministry of Education officials work together to develop teacher training materials.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

"Development of this manual will have a significant impact on the quality of education in Afghanistan and will be useful for school teachers, especially in the provinces and in remote areas, who have limited educational qualifications," affirmed an experienced member of the TED. "We have witnessed their weaknesses during our observations, and I think this manual can help solve most of their methodological problems."

This collaborative effort in materials development for in-service teacher training demonstrates the strong and lasting partnership between USAID and the Ministry of Education's Teacher Education Department.

English Training Prepares Professors for Next Semester: On January 28, five lecturers from Sheik Zayed University in Khost completed an intensive, 45-day International English Language Testing System (IELTS) course provided by USAID's Afghan eQuality Alliances (AeQA) at Kabul Polytechnic University. Thanks to the small class size, English instructors were able to work closely with faculty members to design classroom exercises and to prepare for the IELTS exam at the British Council in Kabul. Like the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, a passing score on the IELTS exam is a prerequisite for many international study abroad programs.

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Participating faculty were pleased to have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in preparation for the next academic term in March. One of the professors has already taken the IELTS exam and is awaiting his test results. The other four participants will take the IELTS exam later next month. In the meantime, the faculty members look forward to continuing their English studies in Khost and are eager to use their new English skills in the classroom. "[USAID's] Afghan eQuality Alliances is the only one providing IT and English language classes for faculty members at our university. Without Afghan eQuality Alliances, we wouldn't be able to improve our English skills," said a Sheikh Zayed University faculty member.

Developing proficiency in foreign languages is one major emphasis of the recently inaugurated Ministry of Higher Education Strategic Plan. AeQA offers IT and English language courses at Afghan Next Generation eLearning (ANGeL) Centers at Balkh University, Hirat University, Kabul Polytechnic University, Kabul University, and Nangarhar University.

International Computer Certification Builds Capacity: Computer literacy is a skill in high demand by employers throughout Afghanistan, and USAID is supporting improved computer instruction in Afghanistan's school system. On February 12, 13 Professional Development Center (PDC) coordinators throughout Afghanistan received International Computer Driving License (ICDL) certificates. The ICDL is an internationally recognized certification indicating superior end-user computer skills.

Participants receive their ICDL certificates at Kabul Education University.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

The 13 recipients are now certified to administer the ICDL examination in Afghanistan. This is the first step in ensuring that more people have the opportunity to take the exam and become computer skills trainers, increasing the number of expert computer users in the country.

The ICDL provides a framework for building skills in the workforce, which will boost the fast-growing area of IT in institutions throughout the country. Khalil Frough, PDC coordinator at Parwan University said "ICDL helps me to enhance my own computer skills and teach others in a better way, in order to have a brighter Afghanistan." ICDL certification is now available at 16 faculties of education, the Afghanistan Technical and Vocational Institute, and the American University of Afghanistan.

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